

Glenshire: Piqua's Forgotten Art Pottery


By

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Introduction

Historically, Ohio's ceramic centers have been confined largely to the eastern part of the state where pure Pennsylvanian fireclays are abundant and readily obtainable. From Akron to East Liverpool, along the Tuscarawas and Muskingum Valleys, then southerly through the Zanesville-Roseville-Crooksville region to the Ohio River at Ironton and environs, clay-working industries have numbered in the hundreds, though now greatly diminished by the development of plastics, cheap imports, and other factors (Stout 1923).

Conversely, comparatively few potteries have thrived in the western half of the state, and those that did owed their success to economic factors such as large demand in heavily populated areas (e.g., Cincinnati), cheap natural gas fuel, and/or cheap transportation, such as that provided by canals, railroads and the Ohio River.

In the early to mid 19th Century, before railroads brought a ready supply of goods from distant areas, nearly every major town had a small redware or (later) stoneware pottery to provide utilitarian ware--- jugs, churns, and milk pans, for example. Art pottery and art china, which developed subsequently, are something of an exception to this generalization, so that we do have Rookwood and its sister art potteries in Cincinnati and the Bell Pottery in Findlay, Hancock Co. (Murphy 2010), but art pottery manufacturers have still remained very uncommon in western Ohio.

Nineteenth Century Potteries in Piqua

Pioneer historian John A. Rayner (1916: 227), supplemented by federal census records, provides some detailed information on early potteries in Piqua, Ohio. According to Rayner, David J. Jordan was the earliest potter in Piqua, his kilns on Main St., just below Miami. Jordan (1804-1872) was born in Warren Co., Ohio, moving to Piqua as early as 1824. An extensive biographical sketch (Beers 1880: 600) indicates that he engaged in the dry-goods business and, during the winters, pork packing. After the death of his wife in 1859, with his family scattered, he moved west, settling in Kansas City, Missouri, where he died in 1869. No mention of pottery-making is made in this sketch, but this could have been an early endeavor. As he engaged heavily in real estate, it may be that Jordan simply owned a pottery operated by someone else (Beers 1880: 600).

Then there was a Benjamin Riffle, “manufacturing crockery” from at least 1860 to 1870 but moving to Fountain Co., Indiana, and taking up farming by 1880. “Crockery” is usually taken to mean lower-fired earthenware or redware, although this is rather late for redware production in Ohio. Next, according to Rayner, was a Mr. Ewell. This is John Ewell, born in Virginia and potting in Piqua as early as 1850, when he was 31 years old and employing three other potters to produce 20,000 pieces of pottery a year. The potters working for him were John Bapp, David Birely, and Batson Berlin. Birely and Berlin have not been traced further, but “John Bapp” is definitely the John *Popp* listed in the 1867 Piqua directory as “Potter and dealer in earthenware” on Main Street. Popp emigrated from Bavaria in 1848 and learned the potter’s trade in Piqua, working at it for three years before building his own shop, which he operated until 1869.

Popp was still potting in 1870, but in Covington, a small village about five miles southwest of Piqua. There he joined with his brother-in-law in the cigar business for five years. By 1880 Popp had quit potting and cigar-making and had opened a saloon in Covington, apparently finding it easier to empty jugs than to make them (Lewis Publishing Co. 1900: 624). As for John Ewell (also spelled “Euell”), although the census record is nearly illegible, it appears that by 1860 he and his wife were living in the Benjamin Riffle household and he was probably working for Riffle rather than in his own pottery.

The last potter in Piqua, again according to historian Rayner, was X. Oweger, whose pottery was on the south side of Young St., between Main and Wayne. The mud for this business came from the swamp south of the Favorite Stove Works. Xavier Oweger, an

immigrant from Bavaria, was naturalized in 1860, and was operating a pottery on Wayne St. in 1878. In 1870 he was listed as a day laborer and by 1880 Oweger was a farmer; however, his son John, aged 23, born in Ohio, and 62-year old John Hefele or Hafele, a boarder, were listed as potters. Xavier Oweger died in 1890 and all potting seems to have ended before 1883 (Furnas 1883).

Regrettably, the utilitarian wares produced by these early potters apparently were not considered significant enough to be signed by the makers. At least no known examples have been found.

The Glenshire Pottery

The Glenshire Pottery was the result of a highly successful (artistically), albeit short-lived, collaboration between a Piqua high school teacher and student, namely Burvil H. Glenn and Donald F. Hampshire. Both men

went on to achieve considerable success in vastly different fields and in subsequent years apparently gave little or no thought to this early endeavor. Donald F. Hampshire's son has mentioned that his father never talked about the pottery, and Burvil Glenn's career does not seem to have involved ceramics again. Both men went in different directions professionally, the one continuing in education and the other continuing in art and design.

The Glenshire Pottery is listed only in the 1938 Piqua City directory and in the 1938 *Ceramic Trade Directory*. Although the trade directory provides no specific information, the Piqua city directory does give the address of the pottery, 409 First St. The street numbers apparently have been changed, as Mrs. Edith Thoma, Donald F. Hampshire's sister, remembers the building



The Glenshire Pottery Building Today
(Courtesy of Thomas F. Hampshire)

in which the pottery was made. It is a small concrete block structure still standing at 411 First Street.

Burvil H. Glenn

Burvill Holmes Glenn was actually born in Maryland, not Columbus, as misstated in one obituary. According to the 1910 census, Glenn was the son of Charles and Mary R. Glenn, all of whom were born in Maryland. The father was a book binder in Greenfield, Indiana, in 1910 but by 1920 the family was back in Baltimore where Glenn was a fertilizer salesman. By 1930 the family had moved to Columbus, Ohio. Here Charles was a commercial traveler for a stove factory. According to an obituary in the *Piqua Daily Call*, (May 12, 1976), son Burvil Glenn was



From the 1935 *Piquonian*

art supervisor in the Piqua public schools from 1930 to 1938 or 1939. Glenn attended Ohio State University where he obtained his M. A. in Education in 1934 and his Ph. D. in 1947. Following his stay in Piqua, Glenn moved around Ohio a bit, as an instructor in commercial art at Canton Timken High School 1939-1943, principal at Orrville High School, 1943-



Dr. Burvil H. Glenn
(University of Buffalo, University Archives)

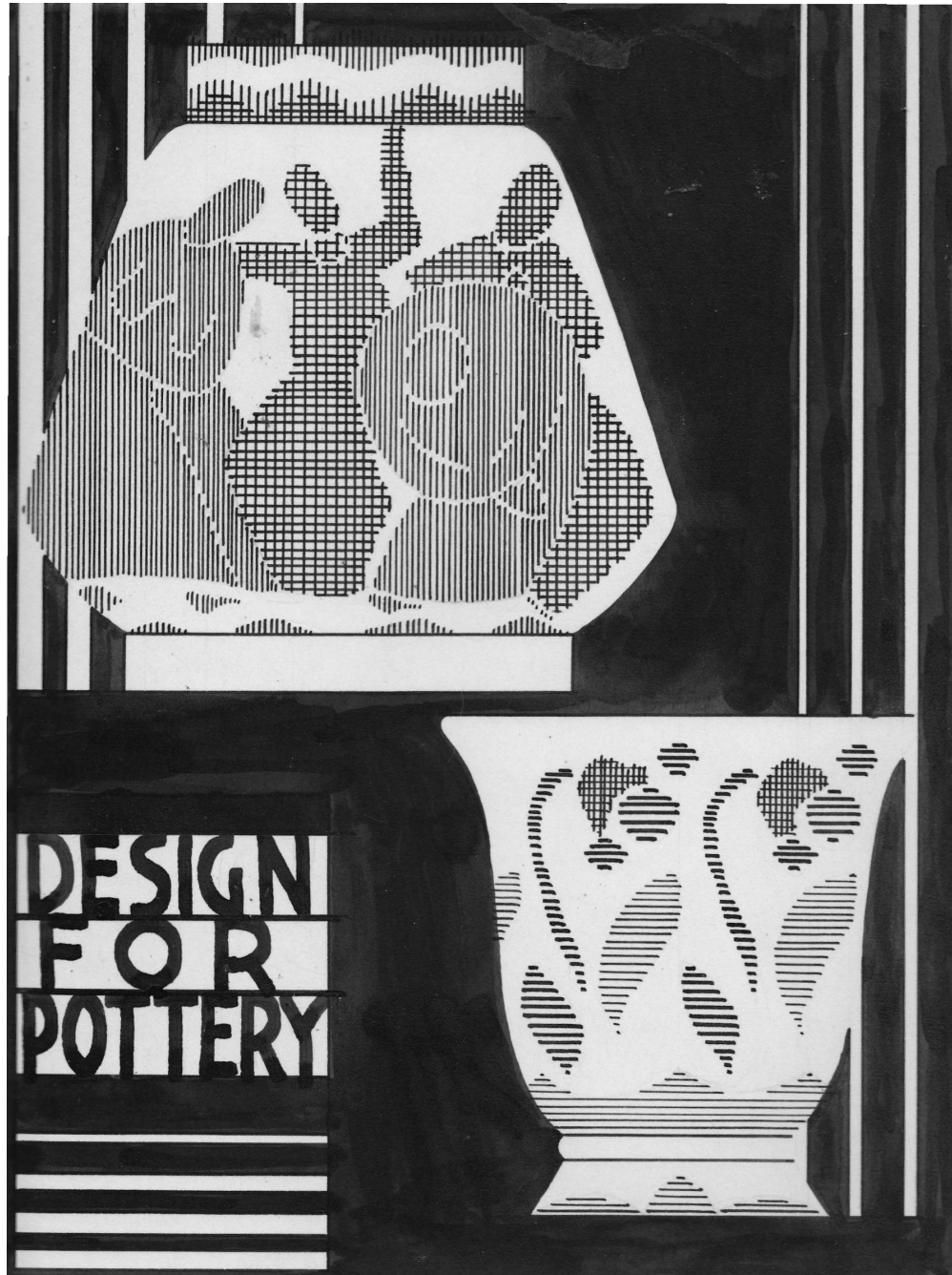
1945, and associate in education research at Ohio State from 1945 to 1947. His career at the University of Buffalo is very impressive but will not be detailed here, as there is no indication that he continued his interest in ceramics or art (Jacques Cattrell Press 1974:398).

Glenn's dissertation topic at Ohio State University was "Certification Requirements for Secondary School Principals in the United States," a massive opus I confess not to have read. His master's thesis, "The Functional Significance of Design," is more relevant to his interest in ceramics, although only 29 pages long. In it he provides two designs for hand painted pottery and indicates that these two pieces were "turned on the potter's wheel" and made "with the idea in mind of showing the importance of form and preserving the character of the clay." Decoration was applied with a brush yet "maintained the quality of belonging to the

piece.” In one the form was massive and strong and the decoration “carried out the structural lines with emphasis being placed upon boldness and strength.” The other form was lighter and more delicate and the decoration “resulted in a light rhythmic movement around the vase.” (Glenn 1934). The location of these vases, if they still exist, remains unknown. No pieces of Glenn’s work have been located at the Baggs Memorial Library, Ohio State University (Mary Jo Bole, pers. comm.).

Glenn’s philosophy in regard to ceramic art is succinctly stated in his M. A. thesis:

“In the field of ceramics artists have gone back to primitive forms in their search for functional designs. Research is bringing to light discoveries which now are overthrowing formerly set ideas concerning beauty in pottery. We even question the functional beauty of some of the



(Glenn 1934: Plate 6)

Greek pottery which so long held a dominant place in the field of ceramic art. In the making of pottery an attempt is made to bring a feeling for the material to the front. Pottery shapes are made with a consideration of the job they have to perform. Thus pitchers take on a shape most suitable to pouring, dinner plates are shapes so that they can hold food and be cleaned easily and each individual type of pottery ware is treated so as to best fulfill its own particular needs. Form in pottery as opposed to pattern is making an increasing appeal. Ceramic designers now place the greatest importance upon material and function. Decoration is subordinated and in many cases not used at all. The form, color and texture of the piece being sufficient to cause a feeling of beauty.” (Glenn 1934: 27).

The few examples of “decorated” ware available from the Glenshire Pottery are of varied appeal and sometimes belie Glenn’s stress on form, function, material, and the

“primitive.” Undoubtedly the least successful is the brown vase with overpainted orange and green floral design, which suggests Glenn should have more closely followed his dictum that decoration should be subordinate and in many cases not used at all. The stylized, rather geometric floral design on this piece is reminiscent of elements in one of the more elaborate “bouquet” designs included in his M.A. thesis (1934: Plate 7), but the simple shape of the piece and the finely mottled glaze might better have been left unadorned.

In another example, a carafe with cups and underplate owned by Thomas F. Hampshire, what is clearly a Glenn design emphasizes his fondness for the use of multiple straight parallel lines (often of con-



Stylized Floral Cold-painting



(Glenn 1934: Plate 7)



Glenshire Decanter
(Courtesy Thomas F. Hampshire)

trasting widths) and simple, geometric patterns. In this instance, the black design seems to be more compatible with the rather Southwestern style of the carafe, or at least provides a Southwestern flare to a form that could also be considered Art Deco, an influence apparent in other Glenn illustrations in his M. A. thesis. The decoration is



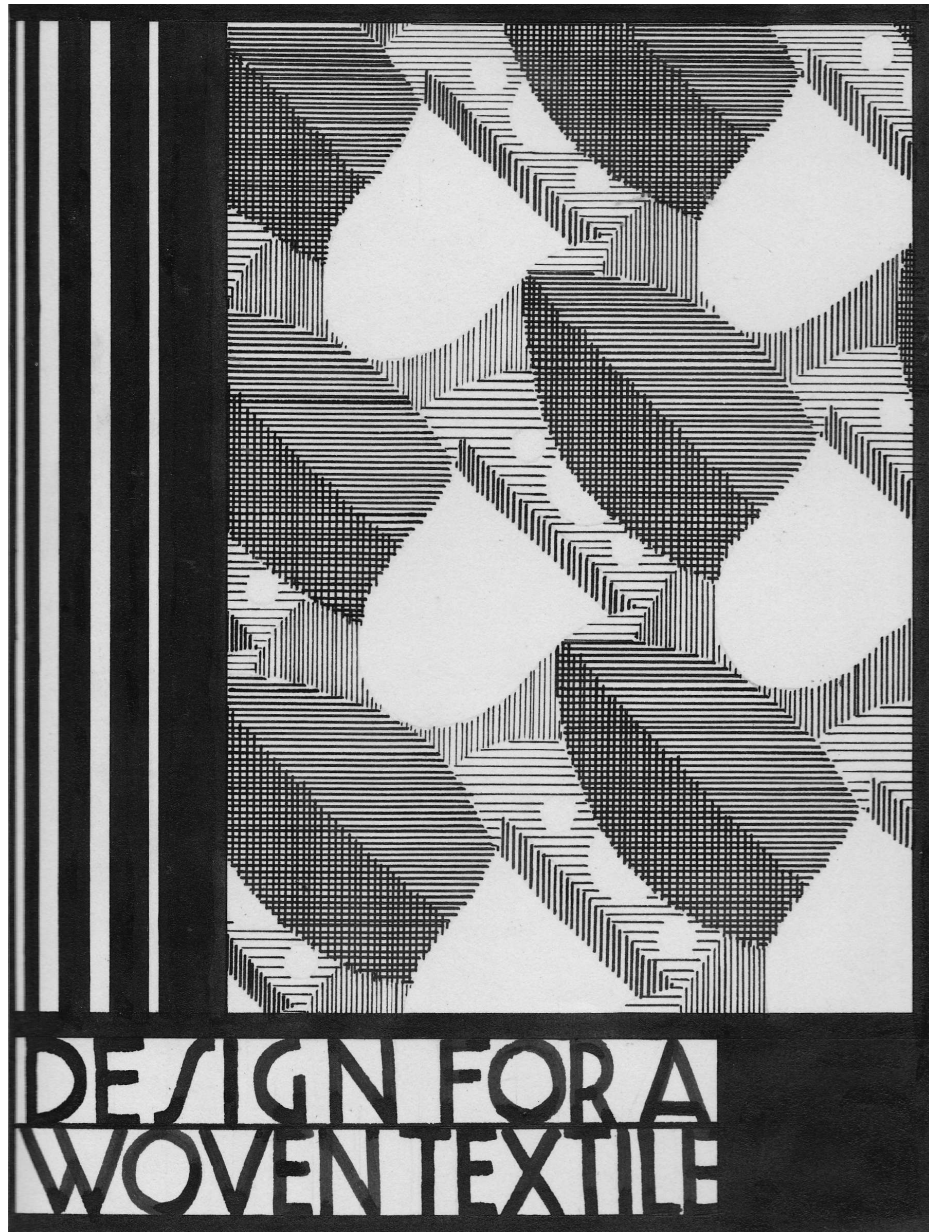
also somewhat reminiscent of Weller's Souevo and "Camelot" lines but cold painted rather than molded, and more examples would be needed before suggesting any kind of influence or derivation from Weller.

Still another example is of interest for having a decidedly Art Deco shape embellished by a raised floral design. In this case,



(Courtesy Thomas F. Hampshire)

too, the stylized flower is almost precisely duplicated by a design in Glenn's M. A. thesis.



(Glenn 1934: Plate 5)

One other piece of Glenshire Pottery with a raised or embossed design is available. It is



(Courtesy Mrs. Lowell (Mary Ellen) Dean)

a small light blue rose bowl with a raised design around the rim. The design, unfortunately, is not well shown in the only available

photograph and with the death of Mr. and Mrs. Dean the bowl is no longer available.

From the available evidence, it seems probable that Glenn was largely if not entirely responsible for design at the Glenshire Pottery and in the absence of additional evidence we are left to infer that that Hampshire was responsible for the actual operation of the pottery. The latter should not be dismissed as mere “grunt” work but whether it included mold-making, if the molds were not purchased, remains unknown, as does the degree the two men each participated in developing the glazes, the actual slip-casting, firing, and finishing of the pieces. Nor do we have a clue about such matters as production or sales and distribution.

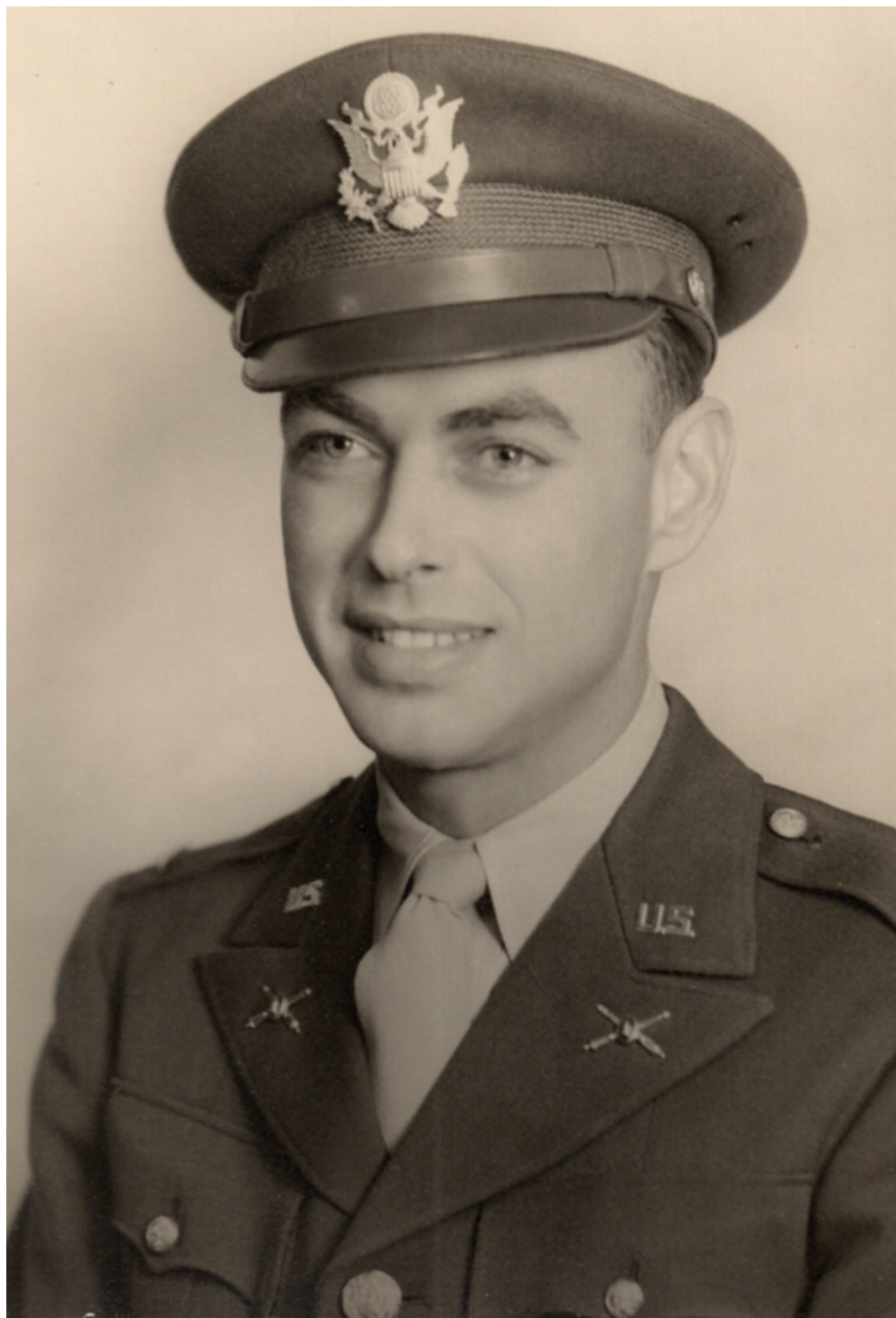
Although it is not known for certain where Glenn received his training in ceramics, it very probably was at Ohio State

University in conjunction with earning his B. Edu. degree, or in conjunction with his M.A. program. According to the American Ceramic Society's web site, "The first high school ceramic courses" were taught in East Liverpool, Ohio, in 1925. If it is intended to say that the first such courses taught *in East Liverpool* were begun in 1925, the statement is correct. It is far from correct, however, to suggest that these were the first such courses in the United States or even in Ohio. As Bassett and Naumann (1997: 15-22) have documented, Guy Cowan was teaching ceramics courses at Cleveland's Technical High School some fifteen years before this. For that matter, there was a high school ceramics program in Chicago as early as 1923 (Chicago *Daily Tribune*, March 4, 1923). Ohio State University had, of course, one of the leading programs in ceramics engineering and the ceramics art program began in 1928, headed by Arthur Baggs.

On obtaining his Ph. D. Glenn began what developed into a 30-year-long career in the Department of Education at the State University of Buffalo, where, among other achievements, he developed a Fulbright program for visiting Asian scholars and became director of the University's Asian Studies program. He also spent considerable time in India, Pakistan, and other Asian countries, with grants from the U. S. State Department and the U. S. Education Foundation.

Donald F. Hampshire

Donald Franklin Hampshire was born July 8, 1917, the son of Early and Lenore Hampshire, and lived in Piqua nearly his entire life, dying there June 13, 1990. During World War II, while Hampshire served in the infantry in Germany until the war's end, his wife, Celeste Butz, worked in



Donald F. Hampshire
(Courtesy Thomas F. Hampshire)

her father's Piqua hardware store. Returning to Piqua, Hampshire worked as a commercial artist for Reynolds and Reynolds of Dayton, Ohio, until 1954 when he founded the Hampshire Construction Co. in Piqua, later changing the name to the Hampshire Co., which it retains today. Eventually concentrating on the custom manufacture of cabinetry, the company was employing as many as 25 people at one time. It is still in business today, greatly expanded, and now headed by Hampshire's son, Thomas F. Hampshire. According to his son, Hampshire "was always very artistic and loved all forms of art, including oil painting, pastels, [and] photography."

This brings us to consideration of the glazes used in Glenshire pottery, which are perhaps the most outstanding feature of the ware. Although we can only guess at the division of labor between Glenn and

Hampshire, it seems likely that Hampshire was responsible for much if not most of the daily operation of the pottery. If he did not develop and test the glazes himself, he certainly was responsible for production of the ware, and the surviving examples attest to his excellent craftsmanship. The most striking example is the “blue onyx” carafe shown below.

The Onyx glaze popularized by Brush-McCoy Pottery is a form of blended glaze, in which pottery first dipped in a glaze of one color is dabbed or stippled with patches of glaze of another color. In other examples, the contrasting second (or tertiary) glazes appear rather to have been dripped down the sides of the piece, blending with one another and producing a more linear and less splotchy or cloud-like effect. Many potteries produced a var-

iety of blended glazes, especially during the heyday of the jardinière and pedestal. As the Huxfords (1978: 17) show, the J. W. McCoy Pottery Co. produced umbrella stands and jardinières in a “Fancy Blended or Red Onyx” ware as early as 1910; but it was this company’s successor, the Brush-McCoy Pottery, that first (in 1924 or 1925) introduced a large assortment of vases, flower bowls, and other shapes in a high gloss blended glaze in shades of green, blue, or brown. The overglaze extended to near the base but did not run beyond the base. Around 1929 the Brush Pottery introduced a “Modern Blended Onyx” of a more reddish brown color, thinner and not as rich, according to DeWayne Imsand (McCoy Pottery Collectors’ Society website (<http://www.mccoypotterycollectorsociety.org/index.htm>)). While the Sanford’s (1992: 44) indicate that earlier Brush-McCoy Onyx ware is identifiable by virtue

of heavier, richer glazes and the presence of stilt marks and grinding on the base. Imsand goes further, implying that the stippled or dappled glaze is earlier, but this has yet to be demonstrated. In fact it seems to be contradicted by Brush-McCoy catalog pages (Huxfords 1978: 74-75) which show both types of glazing offered in the same years (1925). A McCoy Blue Onyx vase engraved to commemorate the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and so dated has the typical cloud-like dappled glaze, and the Glenshire carafe certainly indicates that this stippled effect was being produced by another Ohio pottery in the late 1930s. The "Brown Onyx" vase shown on the cover and below also indicates that Glenshire was using the more typical blended glaze technique as well.

Imsand is also the authority for the statement that the Nelson McCoy Pottery

Co. produced red, blue, and green onyx ware, "blended with white," for a short time beginning in 1932. It is unclear whether he considers this addition of a white glaze unique to the Nelson McCoy ware but such does not seem to be the case. Further, as noted above, while he makes the distinction between onyx and blended glaze, both of which are examples of overglaze technique, "early" onyx being splotchy or stippled, as in the Glenshire decanter, no evidence has yet been given for this distinction having temporal significance.

How the Glenshire Pottery obtained or developed such striking glaze effects remains a mystery, as there is no known contact between Glenn, Hampshire, and Brush-McCoy.



Glenshire Blue Onyx Decanter



McCoy Blue Onyx 1933 Souvenir Vase



“Brown Onyx” Glenshire Vase

Glenshire Pottery Marks

Four marked pieces of Glenshire Pottery currently available. Two of these

are identical, with “Glenshire Pottery” in script and “Piqua, Ohio” in block letters, while the other two are distinguished by



by the words “Hand Made.” One of these has the name of the pottery embellished with the article “The” Glenshire Pottery.





Courtesy of Mr. Thomas F. Hampshire

Conclusion

In thirty years of collecting Ohio pottery, even abetted by e-Bay, I have found only three examples of Glenshire Pottery, evidence that, while anecdotal, strongly suggests examples of this ware are very uncommon, as might be expected for a short-lived, two-man operation.

This meager collection has been augmented for study purposes by two examples owned by Burvil Glenn's sister, the late Mary Ellen Dean, and three pieces owned by Donald Hampshire's son, Thomas F. Hampshire. As it happens, both collections include an example of the same shape, a classic form with angular handles but with very different glaze treatments, a beige or tan



Unmarked Glenshire "Posey Ring"
(Courtesy of Mary Ellen Dean, Westerville, Ohio)

glaze on Mrs. Dean's example and a mottled white in the case of the Hampshire piece.



Courtesy Mrs. Lowell (Mary Ellen) Dean



Courtesy Thomas F. Hampshire

We will never know how Glenshire Pottery might have developed had it's life not been cut short by Donald Hampshire's entering the Armed Services and Burvil Glenn's leaving Piqua for Canton Timken High School. While there appears to have been an active art community in Canton following establishment of the Canton Art Institute (now the Canton Museum of Art) in 1935, the museum collections contain no examples of Glenshire Pottery or work by Burvil H. Glenn. (pers. comm., Lynnda Arrasmith). Similarly, Hampshire pursued a career as a commercial artist following his return from the service, but it did not encompass ceramics, nor does Glenn seem to have shown any interest in ceramics during his later career in education.

Acknowledgements

I still recall a pleasant visit with the late Mr. and Mrs. Lowell Dean in their Westerville home nearly twenty years ago, when Mrs. Dean allowed me to photograph the several pieces of Glenshire Pottery in her possession. More recently Mr. Thomas Hampshire has kindly provided information and photographs of the Glenshire pieces he owns, as well as photographs of the Glenshire Pottery building.

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